

Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF

4

August - September 1997

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YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN VIENNA

At the Crossroads of Different Cultures

For a long time, the city of Vienna has been a crossroads where different European cultures meet and accept one another, learning from one another in their diversity. Because of this tradition, people coming from the North or the South, the East or the West can feel at home in that city.

Vienna is located on the banks of the Danube River, which passes through six different countries of Europe. Those who come to take part in the European meeting will find an attentive and warm welcome, as is shown for example by the interview below with Claudia, who works in a parish in the north of the city.

During the first meetings to give information, people already expressed their joy at welcoming young people from throughout Europe once again at the end of the year: "In our parish, during the previous European meeting, what was especially good was the welcome in families. Some people are still talking about it. Even with very little time to prepare, the whole parish benefitted from the meeting. For the last five years, we have been holding a New Year's Eve prayer each year and an open-air festival in front of the church." "I saw new people take part in parish life because they had welcomed participants in the meeting. Since then, the relationship between young people and adults has improved. Links with the local Protestant congregation have become stronger. We have prayers using the songs from Taizé, for example with children." "I am glad about the bridges that are going to be built, among other things with neighbouring countries—Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic. These countries are less than an hour away from us, but the frontiers have remained very real in our heads! The preparation will give an impetus to our youth group and help us to look beyond our district to see what reconciliation means."

One of the meanings of the European meeting is to discover different forms of involvement undertaken by people in their day-to-day life. Monika (page 7) explains how young people in Vienna are not afraid to give their time to be close to children who have cancer and their

During World Youth Day in Paris

From August 19 to 22, times of prayer and sharing led by Taizé brothers in the church of Saint Sulpice

Thursday evening 21 August, at 8:30 pm, common prayer and meditation by Brother Roger in the church of Saint Sulpice

From Tuesday 19 to Friday 22 August, before the Saturday and Sunday meetings with Pope John Paul II, brothers of Taizé will lead times of common prayer in the church of Saint Sulpice, in the centre of Paris (metro: Saint-Sulpice).

In addition to these times of prayer, there will be times of sharing with young people from around the world on the theme of reconciliation, or the possibility of silent prayer in the church.

Times of common prayer:
Tuesday 19 August: 12:30 pm and 8:30 pm
Wednesday 20 August: 3 pm and 6 pm
Thursday 21 August: 8:30 pm,
with a meditation by Brother Roger
Friday 22 August: 5 pm

Times of sharing or silent prayer:
Tuesday 19 August: from 10 am to 12:30 pm
and from 1:30 pm to 4 pm
Wednesday 20 August: from 2 pm to 3 pm
and from 4 pm to 6 pm.
Friday 22 August: from 2 pm to 5 pm,
with silent prayer around the cross.

families. Many others spend time helping immigrants and other victims of exclusion or discrimination. For many people, Vienna is a synonym for openness and solidarity.

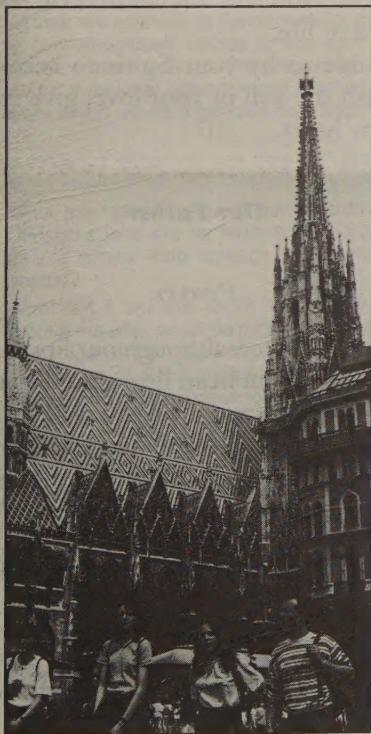
The Roots of the European Meeting

A conversation with Claudia, who works with youth ministry in the north of Vienna.

What comes to mind when you think about the European meeting held in Vienna five years ago?

After the meeting, many people said that they now saw young foreigners, for example Italians or Poles, in a completely different way. In our area, over the past five years, the fear of foreigners has not disappeared. We speak a lot about reconciliation and we see that it is only possible through meeting. That is what happens during the European meetings, where there is a lot of time to talk together and then silence in order to reflect on the experiences you have had. The sharing in small groups was just as

→ 7



Song

Psalm

(Alleluia sung between each verse)

- The Lord is my light and my help, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, then why be afraid?
- Though an army encamp against me my heart would not fear. Though war break out against me even then I would trust.
- There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long, to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to savour the sweetness of the Lord, to behold God's temple.
- For God makes me safe in his tent on the day of evil. God hides me in the shelter of his tent, on a rock I am secure.

(from Psalm 27)

Reading

This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down his life for us. And we too ought to lay down our lives for one another. How can God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not just in words or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are rooted in the truth and will reassure our hearts before him, whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

(1 John 3:16-20)

and for



Song

Silence

Intercessory prayers

(with Kyrie eleison sung between each petition)

- God our Father, fill our lives with your compassion; may we live in the generosity of forgiveness.
- For those who cannot believe and who give their lives in the service of others, we pray to you.
- For the Church, ferment of communion: Lord, let your face shine upon her.
- Christ, light from above, come to visit all who are in darkness: show them the way of your love.
- Be the support of all who are undergoing difficulties and discouragement: you are the source of trust and of life.
- Guide us by your Spirit to accomplish the will of your love; give us a new heart.

Our Father

Prayer

Jesus our peace, although our lips may keep silent, our heart listens to you and also speaks to you. And you say to each of us: abandon yourself in all simplicity to the life of the Holy Spirit; the little faith you have will be enough.

or

Bless us, Christ Jesus; your love for each of us will never disappear.

Songs

A Prayer

**for those who pray
in a group or alone**

*(if two readings are used, a song can be sung
between them)*

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

(Matthew 11:25-30)

This prayer is taken from a book soon to be published. The book will contain forty-four prayers for the entire year and for the different liturgical seasons. It was prepared by brothers of the Taizé Community to help those who pray in a group or alone.

At the end of this year, tens of thousands of young adults from all the countries of Europe will be welcomed in Vienna, the capital of Austria. A new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth," it will be the twentieth European meeting prepared by Taizé.

Taizé

YOUNG ADULT
EUROPEAN
MEETING

Vienna

29 December '97/98
- 2 January

Vienna

To prepare, to register
for the European meeting...

Taking part in the European meeting means preparing oneself to foster reconciliation on all levels, in the human family as well as in the midst of those around us in our daily life.

The welcome in families and parishes helps us to discover, in a tangible way, that peace and trust are possible among people who are very different.

The common prayers, the times of group reflection root the search for the meaning of life in a communion in God.

Meeting witnesses to a commitment on behalf of others, in parishes and neighbourhoods, helps us to take on responsibilities in our own situation.

Practical Details

Date: Arrive Monday morning, 29th December 1997 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart Friday afternoon, 2nd January 1998.

General programme: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. Morning prayer each day will be in one of the local churches of the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day — midday and evening — there will be two common prayers for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes.

Accommodation: Simple conditions — with families, in schools and in church halls. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress.

17 to 29 year olds:

— those who can help, as animators in parishes or as team-leaders for practical

tasks, or in the choir group, need to arrive on Saturday 27th December, between 8am and 3pm. (Arrival not possible on 28th December.)

— those who arrive on 29th December choose one of three ways of taking part: participation in the life of parishes of the city (this is the main group) the silence group (has its own separate accommodation) while still participating in the life of a parish, helping in a team that has a practical responsibility (meal distribution, church team, choir group). It is still possible to join such a group on 29th December.

16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by an adult over 18, with each adult accompanying no more than four 16 year olds. Arrival: 29th December — not before. All take part in the main group during the meeting: "participation in the life of parishes of the city".

Adults over 30: the European Meeting is intended

for young adults under 30, however a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading groups of young adults. We ask older adults (over 45) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, and arrive on 29th December (not before). Those who cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and who need a "real bed" should indicate this on their registration form.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange this.

The contribution to costs expected from each participant can only be given exactly in the autumn. For young people under 30

from Britain, it will be in the region of £50 for the whole meeting; more for adults. As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass.

Send in your registration form by 1st December at the latest. Further information will be sent in November to those who register earlier. Send the form to Taizé either directly or through the person leading your group.

Travel:

— from Britain: for special coaches to the meeting contact "Skyliners", Flaval House, Caldwell Road, NUNEATON, CV11 4NB. Tel: (01203) 325682 / 328410 Fax: (01203) 354626

— from other countries: write to Taizé for information.

Tel.: (+33) 385 50 30 02
Fax: (+33) 385 50 30 16
e-mail: meetings@taize.fr
Web site: <http://www.taize.fr>

Preparation:

For the European meeting to go well, each participant must take part in all that is proposed. An attitude of attention and openness to others, especially from other countries, is vital. The time of preparation should provide a foretaste of the meeting itself, so that those who register know what they are committing themselves to, so that they can consciously decide to take part in all the prayers and meetings. The preparation takes place on a regional basis through meetings and prayers which will be organized from September on.

The following questions can help this preparation:

— What motivates me to set out towards other Christians who are far away? Am I ready to take a similar step towards those who are nearby?

— Who can I set out with? Who do I know around me who would be happy to take part in this stage of the "pilgrimage of trust," in this experience of discovering the meaning of the Church and of being open to others? How can I propose it to other people beyond my circle of friends and acquaintances?

— Can I take a time of silence now and then to review my life, to pray simply while listening to God, and to see what consequences the "pilgrimage of trust" has in my daily life?

— The pilgrimage to Vienna calls for an inner attitude of openness, of attentiveness to others. How can I begin by opening myself to those who need me here and now?

— The starting-point of the pilgrimage is the local community. How can I look for ways, from the very beginning of the preparation, of maintaining and deepening links with different groups and local Christian communities?

REGISTRATION FORM

Send before 1st December to:

■ "European Meeting", Taizé Community, 71250 TAIZÉ, France. Tel: (+33) 385.50.30.02 (9-11 am and 3.30-5.30 pm); Fax: (+33) 385.50.30.16.

■ First Name

■ Family Name

■ Address

■ County or City & State

Post code

■ Telephone :

■ Occupation : Age:

■ ☐ I'm coming alone / with a group from the town of.....
led by

■ (Circle "Yes" or "No" or complete where necessary)

■ ☐ For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor: I need a
bed: yes / no if "yes", say whether you are (please circle): woman
man couple family with children disabled person
helper of disabled person

■ ☐ I will arrive on 29th December: yes / no (arrival time between 7am and 12 noon)

■ ☐ I will arrive on 27th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no

■ ☐ to help with (please circle): animation / work teams / music team.

■ N.B. If for any reason you are arranging your own accommodation, please
send us the address where you will be staying.

What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Son of God?

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the title "son of God" implies a special relationship with the Lord, although the exact nature of that relationship is not always the same. God calls the people of Israel his son (Hosea 11,1, applied to Jesus in Matthew 2,15), because he formed them himself and constantly watches over them. On a personal level, the king is above all referred to as God's son (Psalm 2,7, applied to Jesus at his baptism in Luke 3,22; cf. 2 Samuel 7,14; Psalm 89,27) because he is called to reign in God's name, bringing divine justice and blessing to the earth (cf. Psalm 72).

Applied to Jesus, the expression "son of God" includes these meanings but goes further. To understand its significance, we can begin with a simple and obvious fact: when Jesus speaks to God in his own words, he always calls him "Father." And from Mark 14,36, we know the exact term Jesus used: it was the word "Abba," an ordinary word from everyday life which was not normally used to refer to God. Jesus thus expresses boundless trust in the One whom he sees as the Wellspring of his life; he enjoys a unique intimacy which allows him to say, "I and the Father are one" (John 10,30).

In other words, the expression "Son of God" is not just one title among others that Jesus bears; it is his name. In other words, it indicates his deepest identity. In him there is no private space that he keeps back exclusively for

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

It is sometimes said that Jesus' miracles are an aid to faith. But in our day, one could also say that they create as many problems as they solve. Heirs to a scientific worldview, we may feel ill-at-ease with the vision of God who seems to transgress the laws of the universe he himself has established. Are a naive belief in marvels, or even a taste for the extraordinary, necessary in order to be a believer?

First of all, we need to realize that the ancient world did not see things in the same way as we do. The line between the "normal" and the "miraculous" was less precise than it is for us. If healers and miracle-workers were an accepted part of the spiritual landscape of the time, it is also true that the gospels do not present Jesus in that light. His miracles follow a quite different logic.

A passage from Matthew's Gospel sets us on the right track: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out evil spirits, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12,28). The Jews of the time were ardently waiting for a new and definitive manifestation of God that would repair the mistakes of history and transform the world into a realm of justice and peace. The prophetic books described the signs that would announce that coming of God. When John the Baptist questioned Jesus about his mission, he replied by listing a whole series of these signs: "...the blind see and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead rise and the good news is proclaimed to the

Two Questions About Jesus

himself and that he sees as his true self. On the contrary, he does not possess anything as his own, but is total openness to God, a movement of welcoming and giving.

Because his being in its deepest dimension is constituted by a relationship, it follows that his existence reveals fully the identity of his Father (cf. Matthew 11,27). Jesus does not need to *say* or *do* something special to make God present; what he *is*, the Son, itself implies that he is not alone and indirectly makes visible the invisible God (cf. John 1,18; Colossians 1,15). Begotten by God, he manifests the One who begets simply by being himself: "Whoever sees me has seen the Father" (John 14,9). All of the Christological reflection of the following centuries, which sometimes made use of such a difficult vocabulary, can be seen as a simple development of the single word Abba on the lips of Jesus and of the communion, the shared life, which it expresses: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14,11; 10,38; 17,21).

poor..." (Matthew 11,5, quoting Isaiah 26,19; 29,18-19; 35,5-6; 61,1).

It is thus clear that the miracles Jesus performed were not basically acts that contradicted the laws of nature, but rather signs of the coming of God's Kingdom, tokens of the presence of the God of love who was offering his creation the fullness of life. That is why most of the miraculous signs in the Gospels are acts of healing. And yet, at the same time they are *only* signs, in other words the physical healing is not an end in itself. Jesus shows this clearly in an encounter with a paralyzed man; he brings his body back to health as the outward expression of an inward healing known as the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2,1-12). The purpose of the signs which Jesus performs is to awaken faith in him, to allow people to see in him the one who comes to give humanity the fullness of life (cf. John 10,10) in an unbreakable communion with God.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD SEPTEMBER

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

JOHANNINE HOURS

LUKE 15,11-32

1 Mon Bear each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Ga 6:1-10

2 Tue Moses told the people: God set his heart on you and chose you, not because you are more numerous than other peoples, but because you were out of love for you that the Lord delivered you from the land of slavery.

Dt 7:7-8

3 Wed May there be no divisions among you. Be closely united in mind and thought.

1 Co 1:10-13

4 Thu The Word became flesh and lived among us. From his fullness we have all received.

Jn 1:9-18

5 Fri Without wavering, let us hold fast to the hope we have, for the one who has promised is faithful. And let us seek to stimulate one another in love and and goodness.

Heb 10:19-25

6 Sat Jesus told someone: you still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

Lk 18:18-23

7 SUN Jesus took the man who was deaf and could hardly speak aside, away from the crowd. With a deep sigh, Jesus said "Ephphatha!", that is, "Be opened!". At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly.

Mk 7:31-37

8 Mon The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

Mt 1:18-23

9 Tue God wakens my ear every morning to listen as a disciple.

Is 50:4-9

10 Wed St Paul writes: From now on those who buy something should live as if they did not possess and those who use the things of the world should do so without being engrossed in them. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

1 Co 7:29-31

11 Thu God wanted all his fullness to dwell in Christ, and through him to reconcile all things to himself.

Col 1:15-20

12 Fri Isaiah said: Once again the Lord will breathe upon us, and the wilderness will become an orchard, an orchard as green as the forest.

Is 32:15-20

13 Sat Praised be God who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Co 1:3-7

14 SUN God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

Jn 3:16-18

15 Mon Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Jude 20-21

16 Tue Solomon prayed: Listen, Lord, forgive and act; deal with every person according to all they do, since you know their heart — you alone know the heart of everyone.

1 K 8:22-40

17 Wed Jesus said to his disciples: You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again?

Mt 5:13-16

18 Thu The person who finds their joy in God's law is like a tree planted by the water, which bears its fruit in season and whose leaves never wither.

Ps 1

19 Fri Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me.

Jn 14:1-3

20 Sat This is the command Christ gave us: whoever loves God must also love their brother and sister.

1 Jn 4:16-21

21 SUN Jesus said: Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me.

Mk 9:30-37

22 Mon When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

1 K 19:1-8

23 Tue Jesus said: I am the resurrection. Whoever believes in me shall live, even though they die. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Jn 11:1-45

24 Wed You are light in the Lord. Live as children of light; for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

Eph 5:8-14

25 Thu The path of the upright is like the light of dawn, whose brightness increases to the full light of day.

Pr 4:18-27

26 Fri Taking the nature of a servant, Christ became as human beings are. And he humbled himself still further, remaining faithful to the point of death, and death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted him, and has given him the name that is above all other names.

Ph 2:1-11

27 Sat You have been raised with Christ, so set your hearts on things above, not on earthly things. For you have died and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.

Col 3:1-4

28 SUN Jesus said: If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward.

Mk 9:38-48

29 Mon Like gold tested in a furnace, God purifies those who love him. Those who are faithful to him will dwell with him in love.

Ws 3:1-9

30 Tue Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

Lk 12:22-31

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Saint Augustine offered the following commentary on the parable of the father who welcomes his son, relating it to Jesus' words in Matthew 11,28-30:

While the prodigal son was still thinking about what he would say to his father, (...) his father ran to meet him. What does that mean, to run to meet him, but to assure him of his mercy in advance? "While he was still far off, his father ran to meet him, moved by pity." Why was he moved by pity? Because his son was miserable. "He ran to meet him and threw himself on his neck," in other words, he put his arm around his neck.

The Father's arm is the Son; he gave him Christ to bear; that burden is not a heavy weight; rather it offers relief. "My yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matt 11,30). He put his weight on his son who had stood up, and in putting his weight on him he did not let him fall down again. Christ's yoke is so light that not only is it not a burden, but it offers relief. It is not light in the sense that we say some burdens are light because, although they do have a certain weight, they do not weigh as much as others: (...) Christ's burden is not like that; you have to bear it in order to find relief; if you set it down, you will be more burdened. (...) So when the father fell on his son's neck, he did not burden him; he honored him; he was not a heavy weight. For how could anyone be able to carry God, unless the God he carried carried him?

- How can we not remain trapped in self-reproach, but rather fix our eyes on the Father who runs to meet us?

- When, in my life, did I see Christ as an arm around my neck?

— The text from Saint Augustine is taken from *Soyons l'âme du monde*, textes choisis des chrétiens des premiers siècles (Les Presses de Taizé)

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

OCTOBER

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

JOHANNINE HOURS

LUKE 6,36-38

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps form a time of prayer.

1 Wed Let yourselves be filled by the Spirit. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

Ep 5:14-20

2 Thu Jesus said to his disciples: I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know his master's business. I call you friends, because everything I have learnt from my Father I have made known to you.

Jn 15:15-17

3 Fri Paul writes: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2a 2:15-21

4 Sat Jesus said: If your brother wrongs you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent", forgive him.

Lk 17:3-4

5 SUN Jesus said: Let the little children come to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Mk 10:13-16

6 Mon Your God is with you. God will quiet you with his love and dance with joy for you.

Zp 3:14-18a

7 Tue God's compassion is renewed every morning; his faithfulness is great. It is good to await in silence the salvation of the Lord.

Lm 3:22-26

8 Wed A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Jn 21:15-19

9 Thu All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but they shared everything they had.

Ac 4:32-34

10 Fri Trick the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anybody.

Si 30:21-25

11 Sat Paul writes: May your love be sincere, cling to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection.

Rm 12:9-13

12 SUN Jesus said: No one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, together with persecutions, and, in the age to come, eternal life.

Mk 10:17-30

13 Mon Clothe yourselves in humility in your relationships with others, for God gives his grace to the humble.

1 P 5:5-7

14 Tue My hope is in the God who will save me. Though I lie in darkness, the Lord is my light.

Mi 7:7-8

15 Wed Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and the world may believe that you sent me.

Jn 17:11-21

16 Thu The Lord your God is a merciful God who will not forsake you.

Dt 4:29-31

17 Fri Make the Lord your joy: God will give you even more than your heart's desire.

Ps 37

18 Sat St LUKE Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

Lk 10:1-9

19 SUN Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.

Mk 10:35-45

20 Mon Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who are rejoicing, weep with those who weep.

Rm 12:14-21

21 Tue Jesus said: I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor who will stay with you for ever — the Spirit of truth.

Jn 14:15-21

22 Wed The Lord says to his people: Do not mistreat or oppress the strangers in your midst, for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ex 22:20-21

23 Thu Let what you heard in the beginning remain in you. Thus you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.

1 Jn 2:24-28

24 Fri Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

Jn 17:1-11

25 Sat God's Word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

Dt 30:11-14

26 SUN Jesus asked a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

Mk 10:46-52

27 Mon Since the Spirit is our life, let our actions be guided by the Spirit.

Ga 5:16-26

28 Tue Jesus said: Anyone who gives their life for my sake will find it.

Mt 10:38-39

29 Wed St. Paul writes: Let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any obstacle in the way of another.

Rm 14:13-19

30 Thu I waited, I waited for the Lord, and he heard my cry. He put a fresh song in my mouth: a hymn of praise to our God.

Ps 40

31 Fri Let us not become tired of doing good. The harvest will come in good time if we persevere.

Ga 6:7-10

How can we understand the words of Jesus: "Do not judge, do not condemn"? It has sometimes been thought that they refer to the excessive harshness of some judgements. But if that were the idea, why could Jesus not have said: "Judge with moderation; do not condemn harshly"? What did he mean, then? The words that follow can help us go in the right direction. Jesus adds, "You will not be judged; you will not be condemned." He does not only invite us not to judge others. His word also frees us from the worry of being judged ourselves, of the judgement we might deserve. They take us out of the world of rights and judgements.

We can move away from "justice" in two different directions. On the one hand there is injustice. But on the other hand, there is that new form of existence which the Gospel calls the Kingdom of God. The word came offered to the prodigal son and the salary that the workers of the eleventh hour receive (Lk 15,11-32; Matt 22,1-16) are not strictly speaking "just." But this measure of God's Kingdom, compassion, is of another order. It is a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing (v. 38).

When we try to fix a situation with criticisms and demands, in the best case we obtain what we consider fair and just. But what if God wanted to give us more, to open before us an unexpected horizon? The Kingdom of God is that surprise. One day, Jesus said to those who were working hard to make things better by means of judgements and condemnations, "You are not entering yourselves into God's Kingdom and you are not even allowing to enter those who wish to" (Matt 23,13). Not judging means keeping our eyes open to see the miracle of God and welcoming it in other people and in our own life.

- What does "loving with compassion" mean for me?
- In what situations do criticism and demands shut doors and keep us from discovering what God wants to give us?

important as the prayers in the large halls. In these meetings you discover both God and human beings at the same time. For me, that is what is specific about the European meetings.

The young adults who come give a lot to those of us who welcome them. The welcome does not need to be planned ahead of time down to the smallest details. Our guests will take on a lot of responsibility themselves, spiritually as well as materially.

Such a meeting requires a lot of work...

But it is also a gift. The most beautiful was New Year's Eve: being able to welcome the new year in our church in so many different languages, and wish each other a happy new year in a brand-new way. The goodbye letters were also beautiful and sometimes very deep. The parish felt a deep sense of wonder for everything that had become possible, for all the doors that were opened.

What do you expect from the upcoming European meeting for the parishes?

I am a lay worker in the Church. For us it will be good to see so many young adults who search authentically, who have set out on account of their faith, who feel that spiritual life is important, who are ready to go towards others, to climb over barriers of nationality and religion. It is also important to recognize that work with the young is not limited to the usual projects and activities; it is more important just to walk alongside them, to be with them. That is precisely what is possible during the European meetings, because everything is very simple: the young people are there, they pray together and discover one another just as they are, and they do it in a normal parish.

How do you explain the fact that such an experience is possible?

When I am at peace, when I feel the roots that support me, I relate to others in a totally different way. When I cannot feel these roots and I run from one thing to the next, life becomes impossible. During the preparation for the European meeting, the accent is placed on peace, on prayer. In this way the discussions become much deeper. The European meetings have roots. For almost twenty years, these meetings have been growing slowly and have matured. I see a sign of this in the trust and the peace that remain, even when unexpected problems arise, problems that are inevitable when such large numbers of people with such different outlooks come together.

How does your parish prepare for the meeting?

When I meet young people, I tell them about my first visit to Taizé when I was

sixteen, then some of them talk about their experience five years ago during the first European meeting in Vienna. What is important is for the young people to understand that this preparation concerns them in a deeply personal way, and they sense this quickly. Then, they will be ready to share the information themselves with families and people in the parishes, and I will support them.

Sharing Suffering

Monika, who studies theology, tells about a regular prayer at St. Anna's Children's Hospital:

Almost two years have passed since I went for the first time to take part in the prayer using the songs of Taizé in St. Anna's Children's Hospital. When I look back, I see few events that have changed and touched me as deeply as this bi-weekly prayer. This is no doubt due in large part to the fact that I was forced to deal with a question that I had previously tended to run away from--the question of suffering and death. Since the hospital came into my life, I can no longer run away from that question. Sick children from different countries, their parents, doctors and nurses constantly come and pray with us, and they talk about what they are going through, their sufferings. As a result of all these contacts, the desire has grown not just to pray with them, but to share part of their life. This is possible when we visit the children or when we join the hospital chaplain for funerals, baptisms, confirmations and other celebrations in the hospital. The important thing is just being there, sharing people's suffering and walking alongside them for part of their journey.

I thought about this one day on the way home from the burial of a twelve-year-old girl who died of cancer. It rained the whole day. We were tired and sad. Always the same questions with no answer: why does God allow children to suffer in this way? What meaning can these tears and this pain have? But all of a sudden, in front of us, instead of rain, there was a luminous and serene evening, with a blue sky and a beautiful sunset above the hills. It was like the promise of an undefinable presence, of a rest and a hope beyond death. If only we could be, through our prayer and our presence at the hospital, something like that sunset promising peace and hope... That is all I would wish for.



Listening to the Continents

Pakistan

The Inner Prayer of the Heart

One of the Taizé brothers visited us in November last year for the third time. We Christians in Pakistan are 1.5% of the predominantly Islamic population. In some places, the Christians live in bigger communities. The village of Khushpur is one of these and the Christians there enjoy a better standard of life and liberty. One of the teachers at the catechetical training centre there invited us to come to share about trust and inner life. Nearly a hundred people, young catechists, their wives and teachers gathered for prayer on a Sunday evening.

Elsewhere, in a desert-like place near Toba Tek Singh, many young adults came for the week-end to spend some time in silence. On the Friday, they prayed around the cross and this was a new experience for them. We were in a poorly lit room which became very cold during the night, yet we were warm in spirit. During the evening prayers, the desert became very quiet and dark. The candles set on pieces of brick shed light on each of the faces and people's eyes reflected the inner prayer of the heart. Later, Zafar, one of the boys who had been in Taizé for the intercontinental meetings, spoke of his experience of silence in Taizé, "I had always read the Bible just like a holy book, but during my stay in Taizé, for the first time I read the gospel with the eyes of the spirit and I found a quite new meaning in each word. In the silence, each word spoke to me in the language of trust in Christ, our eternal friend."

In Lahore, a group of young people from Samanabad parish recently came together. The Christians there live among a predominantly Muslim population. They are on good terms with their non-Christian neighbours. One of the

Taizé
YOUNG ADULT
EUROPEAN
MEETING
Vienna
29 December - 2 January 1998

girls said, "There are only a few of us families here, but we are happy that we are not isolated. We have friendship with our non-Christian companions in our colleges, working places, and here in our street. We young people meet for prayer every Friday evening. We read the Bible, share part of Brother Roger's Letter, and talk about the things that preoccupy us in our daily lives. We discover that we are not alone, when we think about the thousands of young people praying together in Taizé, India and many other places."

Indonesia

Living Out a Host of Reconciliations

The events which have affected our country over the last few months, and especially recently, lead us to write to you about our current situation in Indonesia. For several months we had been preparing a youth gathering to be held in Bandung at the beginning of March. The young people organised everything, dividing out the work: finding accommodation, preparing the prayers, the food, and so on. Invitations were sent to different cities and we were all very enthusiastic.

This was not our first meeting, over the years there have been several, and last year a meeting in Wedi, central Java, was attended by over 500 young people. This year, we wanted to have something similar for all those who animate prayers using the songs from Taizé. We have regular prayers in parishes not only in Bandung, but also in Jakarta, Sukabumi, Yogyakarta, Flores, Manado and Medan. Everywhere, the young people are in charge and we are surprised to see how much they like it and how much the fact of meeting regularly for prayer helps them. We feel that it is important to take some time to to prepare young people to animate the prayers in their parishes in the best possible way.

These last months have been heavy in Indonesia. In West Kalimantan there have been ethnic conflicts between native Dayak and migrant Madurese. In early January, a peace accord was signed but it broke down in February. The Dayaks are mostly Christian and the Madurese Muslims, and even if the conflict is ethnic we realise how easily it could be transformed into a religious one.

At the same time, tension has increased in Java too. Churches have been burned, among them one of our new churches, dedicated only in July last year. Threats, anonymous letters... finally the meeting was cancelled or postponed because some thought that we could not take such a risk and responsibility. You cannot imagine how disappointed we were. We felt that it was a failure. Our friends in other cities could not understand the reason for postponing the meeting and we felt very discouraged. However, the brother who was supposed to help us animate the meeting came all the same, and every day we went to pray in different parishes, including the cathedral, where our bishop joined us for prayer. On the Saturday, we gathered for a recollection, where we could share our frustrations and try to overcome the disappointment and finally begin to accept the situation. How appropriate Brother Roger's Letter for this year is. We do indeed want to live out a multitude of reconciliations and to pass from doubt to the brightness of a communion.

Poland

A Place of Welcome for Children

Joanna from Sosnowiec writes: I remember the first time I heard people talk about creating a place of welcome for children and about the importance of helping the very young. I was impressed by their devotion, but I felt incapable of undertaking such a service myself.

And then, in our parish, during the meetings to prepare for the European meeting in Stuttgart, children began coming to see what was going on in the rooms where religious education takes place. I, who tended to be afraid of children, began to welcome them and to go toward them. In this way, with no preparation, our "place of welcome" began. The priest encouraged us and the children began to come regularly. At first it was hard to win their trust. They come from broken families, and they were aggressive and mistrustful towards people they did not know. Little by little trust grew, and now they are happy to come. We try to share with them a little bit of human warmth by playing with them. One of us is always present to listen, eat or play with them.

Later on, we were asked to help them with their homework. What a surprise when they began to ask questions and to read out loud! What a joy for us to see quick results in this work!

This work with children is a gift I have received from God. I give a little bit of myself, but I receive a lot, above all the gift of loving.

Sweden

Preparing for Reconciliation and Non-Violence

In a sharing-group in a suburb of Göteborg, we began in 1994 to reflect on the possibility of stirring up a wave of non-violence in order to break the wave of violence that many people seemed to feel was inevitable. Could we, ordinary young Swedes, do anything? The question came at the right time, because an group of right-wing extremists had just organized a festival in this district, where a large percentage of the population is made up of immigrants, and it ended with a fight between the police and the residents.

Our first step was to organize a course on non-violence and conflict management, to see if people were interested in this approach. There was such strong interest that an association was founded in May 1995. Since then this association, called Praxis, has trained more than 4,000 persons in non-violence and conflict management. By role-playing, forums, by beginning with the lived experience of the participants, Praxis found a model that seemed to work, at least in Sweden. It involved a little bit of theory and many practical exercises: how do I react in a given situation, if I witness a conflict? What can I do when, in a bus, an immigrant is provoked, or when, during a party, two people begin to argue, or when the chairperson of a meeting refuses to let the participants express their opinions?

This association is open to people from every religious and political viewpoint, but a good many of its members are Christians, and this has made collaboration with the Churches

easy. Many of those who work with young people in the Churches have taken the courses, in order to be able to acquaint young Christians with concrete ways of dealing with violence.

Upcoming Meetings in Australia

● WEEK-END RETREAT FOR YOUNG ADULTS (18 - 30 years)

Friday 26 to Sunday 28 September 1997

Theme: A call to the younger generations to undertake a multitude of reconciliations in order to go toward the year 2000

Venue: Stanwell Tops Christian Conference Centre
Off Bendena Garden Road
Stanwell Tops NSW 2508

● DARE TO SING, DARE TO PRAY

Friday 3 to Monday 6 October 1997

A week-end retreat intended for those who regularly participate in prayer services at which the songs of Taizé are used.

Venue: St Columban's College
420 Bobbin Head Road
North Turramurra NSW 2074

● A DAY OF SINGING AND REFLECTION

Sunday 12 October 1997 (11.00 am to 8.30 pm)

Venue: St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney

● EVENING PRAYER

Sunday 12 October 1997, 7.30 PM
The Crypt, St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney

Information for these events:
NSW Ecumenical Council
Private Bag 199 QVB Post Office
SYDNEY 1230

Letter from Taizé

Ordinary subscription: 40 FF (France 30 FF)
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- In certain countries it is possible to pay within the country:

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